Evaluation of Stress and its Associated Stressors Among Undergraduate Dental Students: A Questionnaire-based Study

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Abstract

Aim: To evaluate the stress and its associated stressors or stress factors among dental undergraduate students.

Background: Stress is a subjective feeling that acts as a barrier to preventing his/her goal. Stress occurs in everyone's life in every aspect of life due to enormous reasons, and so dental students are cited for facing various amounts of stress throughout their academics due to several reasons.

Materials And Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted among undergraduate students (including interns) in a self-financing dental college in Tiruvallur, India. A google survey was conducted to collect data regarding academic sessions, environmental issues, and profiles of socio-demographics.

Results: Out of 500 dental undergraduates participating in the study, nearly 332 (66%) students are stressed. Nearly two third of students have reported being stressed is a large number. The study has also found that students from the internship are under more stress while studying in college, possibly due to work pressure or fears of their future after graduation.

Conclusion: Sociodemographic profile, academic matters (performance of the study, curriculum, and frequency of tests), stress predictors, and physical stressors such as physical problems, high expectations of parents, and family issues are revealed as reasons in this dental curriculum. Management programs in dental colleges should be developed to improve students' psychological support and promote better psychological health and coping.

INTRODUCTION

Any eliciting biological response of intrinsic or extrinsic stimulation is known as stress. Stress may threaten and negatively impact an individual's physical and mental health. Stress can cause multiple steps on the human, extending options for balance to the effect of threats and even death based on the severity of applying stimulus and timing. One of the most stressful professions and experiences is considered dentistry at the time of starting their dental studies. Studies all over reported stated that the stress due to dental education is comparatively higher than in other professional studies or medical studies.
It is considered that dental study is stressful, and it is intensified at the time by moving students through the years gradually. During dental studies, the students go through immense stress for multiple reasons, including courses meeting, high expectations, the anxiety of handling patients' demands of the curriculum, and clinical requirements.  

"Dental education is seen as a complicated, demanding, and often stressful pedagogical exposure," according to research by the "Global congress" on dental studies (2008). It involves acquiring required academic, clinical, and interpersonal skills during learning." Patients' treatment and conducting skills are needed in practicing dentistry, and even characteristics that are also needed cause stress for dental students. 

Perceived stresses have also been related to present mental pain, the fourth upcoming health issue. Their ability to learn and perform in studies is affected by their emotional, physical, family, and social problems. Hence, the study was carried out with the following objectives: (a) to determine the actual number of dental students who are undergraduate and stressed from the total count, (b) to identify the causes of stress, and (c) to determine which year of student are at the higher rate of stress.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

One divisional context was managed in the participants who are undergraduates in a self-financing college of dental education, Tiruvallur, India. A total of 500 students are asked to join in the study. The dental students who are undergraduates from 1st year to Interns were invited to participate in the dental courses. The motive of the context was described to the students. The participants who joined the courses were added, and the students were told to finish a management test given through a google survey form created online. The questionnaire includes the following sections a) sociodemographic details, b) academic sources, c) psychosocial sources d) environmental sources.

**Inclusion Criteria**

The students who are willing to participate in the courses were observed in the additional criteria.

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Students from 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year, and CRI were included in the study.

**Exclusion Criteria**

The exclusion criteria added the dental students who were not present during the preceding times (till one month) of the studies and the dental students who were not concerned about joining the study.

**Ethical Approval**

The Institutional Review Board approved the study protocol.

**DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

The test was provided for undergraduates through a google survey form. It was told to the dental students to approach the investigators quickly based on doubt regarding any query in the test survey. The test was divided into three parts which included the following:

- Part 1: Details of sociodemographic
- Part 2: Questions related to stress and its triggering factors
- Part 3: Questions in the section about stressor/stress factors, including academic/psychosocial/environmental stressors.

The information was gathered, processed, organized in a logical order, and examined in terms of frequency (yes/no).

**Statistical Analysis**

ANOVA was used to compare the difference between the three groups. The statistical importance was calculated at a *p*-value set at about 0.05.

**RESULT**

Essential characteristics such as age, gender, and years were compared. Males constituted 39.2%, and Females constituted 60.8%. 1st year participants were 20.2%, 2nd year participants were 20.6%, 3rd year participants were 19%, 4th year participants were 20.6%, and Interns were 19.6%. Questions were compared and aggregated at the academic year level, and the analysis was performed; questions were asked concerning stress and its associated factors. Questions were:

(i) a total number of graduates who are stressed. The result is that 332 (66%) students were stressed during undergraduate education. (ii) Is there any difference between the three groups of the section, which are stressed due to academics, stress due to psychosocial, and stress due to environmental conditions? One-way ANOVA was performed to compare 3 groups. The results came to be not statistically significant as the *p*-value was 0.764. (iii) Which year was highly affected due to stress? We could see interns were highly stressed compared to the other year’s students. This could be due to high work pressure or the management between studies and work simultaneously, or it may be due to fear of their future career.

**DISCUSSION**

The study looked at dentistry students’ perceptions of stress, possible academic, psychological, and environmental stressors, and the relationship between viewed stress and stress factors of sociodemographics and pains (Table 1).

Various personal and institutional factors can affect dental students’ mental deterioration. According to a recent study, schools of medical studies can create an unsafe mental environment in which the pressure...
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of studies, working load, economic challenges, and lack of sleep are all stresses.12

According to Halboub et al., reducing and relieving pressure among the students studying dental courses will improve determination and achievement of studies, resulting in better patient management and care.13

The study conducted have shown that in a total of 500 undergraduate students, about 332(66.4%) students are stressed (Table 2), which shows that a larger population are stressed and shows various stressors or stress factor are the given reasons for the stress that affects the performance in their academics and also affects the physical and mental health of the students.

The study also showed that about 328(65.6%) students are stressed due to the vastness of the academic curriculum. The study participants that participated stated that nearly 312(62.4%) are stressed due to the presence of quota, and it was also stated that about 317(63.4%) are highly stressed due to the completion of their quota at a given amount of time (Table 3).

In the psychosocial section, study participants stated that nearly 323(64.6%) are stressed due to loneliness, depression, and burn out in their under-graduation. Also, this study recorded that about 319(63.8%) are stressed due to financial problems in their family. The high parental expectation is one of the critical stress factors where about 313(62.6%) (Table 3).

In the environmental section, the study has shown that nearly 281(56.2%) are stressed due to homesickness. In comparison, about 285(57%) of the undergraduates are stressed due to traveling long distances from college and vice versa (Table 3).

Brahmbhatt et al., in their study, showed that more expectations of parents and isolation were the leading causes of mental pressure.14 In the current study, high expectations of parents and family issues were important for assessing mental pressure.

The study also revealed that from comparing all the academic years of dental undergraduate students, interns were highly stressed compared to all other years of dental students (Table 4).

Travel, peer adjustment, and living conditions had a minimal amount on stress level; however, fear of individual staff in a department and worrying about the future have a significant amount of stress. The high acceptance of pressure among dental students is a concern since this can affect dental students’ conduct, studying, and taking care of patients.

Undergraduate dentistry students may be harmed by a high prevalence of stress, which can lead to poor academic performance, dropout, drug addiction, and suicide. Because of the significant influence of stress on undergraduate dentistry students, stress management programs in dental school are required.

CONCLUSION

This study found psychosocial factors to be a significant source of stress among dental students. Nevertheless, the academic source was also a significant predictor of stress.

Interventions must be devised to target specific stressors to alleviate the strain on pupils. Students should be taught various stress management approaches to strengthen their ability to cope with the demanding professional course. Various activities should be done from the first year onwards to lessen the stress burden. Teaching dental students stress management and self-care skills is becoming increasingly important. Students’ stress levels can be reduced by encouraging them to participate in extracurricular activities, conducting community camps, and student welfare programs to improve their mental health, which would be a stress buster. Organize workshops on skill development, time management, and career guidance.

Limitations

The research sample was restricted to a single dental institution; hence, generalization should be made with prudence. Research should also focus on involving students from other dental institutions. Since the information was obtained from a self-administered questionnaire, information bias cannot be ruled out.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank the participants who participated and for their collaboration throughout the study and also would like to thank the Department of Oral and maxillofacial pathology.
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FINANCIAL DECLARATION
Nil.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
This study has no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES


10. Health promotion needs of the students in a college environment


